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ABSTRACT

Audiovisual aids are properly used in reading when they "turn students on," and they are abused when they fail to do so or when they actually "turn students off." General guidelines one could use in sorting usable from unusable aids are (1) Has the teacher saved time by using an audiovisual aid? (2) Is the aid appropriate to the sophistication level of the students involved? (3) Is the purpose which it serves appropriate at this developmental level in the reading program? and (4) Is the particular medium appropriate to the learning of a given individual at a certain period of time? (Author/DE)

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Uses and Abuses Of Audio-Visual Aids In Reading

10:45 A.M. Session, Friday, May 8, 1970

(The opening multimage presentation was a part of an actual reading lesson in a sixth grade class.) If we accept the thesis that reading is a cognitive process, that it is the thinking process itself, then whatever turns on this process may or may not be in the form of a printed page. Such a liberal interpretation of reading allows for a very liberal application of our subject for this session -- Uses and Abuses of AV Aids in Reading.

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Audiovisual Aids or Media are properly <u>used</u> when they "turn students <u>on</u>."

They are <u>abused</u> when they fail to do so, or when they actually turn students <u>off</u>.

The question of what turns any given individual on or off, becomes a very personal one. Isn't reading also a very personal process? This means that whatever is presented here must of necessity be very general in nature. The specific applications will have to be your own. There is actually a continuum from Uses to Abuses. Along this continuum you can fit in your own personal specifics, as each student fills in his own personal specifics in your reading classes.

The function of audiovisual media in the teaching-learning process varies from that of presenting material to that of serving to extend the senses and sensibilities of teacher and learner in the educational process. Many of you are no doubt familiar with the use of overhead projection in connection with teaching word analysis, phonetic analysis and similar word attack skills. This is a legitimate replacement of the daily "do not erase" on the chalk board. The need to do an entire lesson over each time it is used, consuming valuable teacher time, can be eliminated by the use of rather simple audiovisual aids. A file of transparencies can make easy reference and review possible for teachers and students.

ECONOMY OF TEACHER TIME

The criterion of teacher time saved by the use of an audiovisual aid is one general guideline in sorting usable from unusable aids. As education becomes more and more involved in the business and industrial life of our society, and as more and more industries become involved

in education, the pressures to use business office efficiency measures will increase. Teacher time and effort as measurable inputs become important considerations. Teacher time as an hourly pay rate may be more valuable than the cost of materials for projection and the machines to project them.

Sometimes, as in the case of many overhead transparencies, this purely economic factor may make the use not only legitimate, but necessary. I am sure you have your own examples of such uses in reading, instances in which you could do the job just as well without the audiovisual aid, but it would take more of your time to get it ready and to get the job done.

APPROPRIATENESS TO STUDENT LEVEL

A second guideline for measuring the validity of an audiovisual aid is its appropriateness to the sophistication level of the students involved. The dominant feature of our society is the rapidity with which it changes. Sociologists, historians, economists all repeat the theme. Children are maturing at a much more rapid rate -- biologically and psychologically. A preschool child who has enjoyed a diet of Sesame Street will not sit still for dullness in reading classes. There are degrees of sophistication in materials and their presentation that teachers will be forced more and more to recognize. We can no longer teach as though the horn book, the chalk board, and the electric light were our only tools. The

kids know better. They have seen "letters go walking" and the "first doing the talking." They are used to more sophistication in illustrations and reading content than "Oh! Oh! Look! Look!". We must keep on the alert for the kinds of audiovisual aids that will help meet these sophisticated learners.

But, the level of sophistication must be appropriate. A speed reading device, or pacer, that speeds to hundredths of a second would probably be misused with elementary age youngsters. It <u>may</u> be appropriate at some other level in the reading program.

APPROPRIATENESS TO PURPOSE

This leads to the third criterion for measuring effectiveness of an audiovisual aid in reading. Is the purpose which it serves appropriate at this developmental level in the reading program? The most general abuses in this regard are with the use of pacing or speed reading devices. These are not intended to teach reading skills. They are to increase proficiency after skills have been acquired. Learn to read, then pick up speed. There is an appropriate developmental progression. There are increasing numbers of questions about the large number of listening programs being promoted as reading programs. There are skills in listening, just as there are skills in speaking, and skills in reading. The assumption that teaching skills in listening is teaching reading may not be valid. This sounds almost like the old "transfer of training" dog that we clubbed around for so many years. If you teach Latin you

improve English skills. We have now decided to teach Latin for the sake of Latin -- if it is worth learning -- and to teach English for the sake of English -- if it is worth learning -- and to help students to integrate these learnings in their own way, at their own levels. Let's be sure we're teaching what we intend, or at least recognize it for what it is. To use listening devices to teach reading is only one part of the process. The transfer to the act of reading, of getting ideas from visual sources, must be consciously made. Reading is, after all, a visual process, if it has any distinctiveness. Equally important are considerations of the distinctiveness of the various media included in the broad category labeled audiovisual aids. Each medium has its distinctions, and these must be respected, if they are to be properly used. Slides may be appropriate where selectivity is important. Filmstrips may be appropriate where a set continuity is important. Transparencies may be appropriate where eye to eye contact is important. A flannelboard may be appropriate where physical manipulation is important. Pictures may be appropriate where the flat medium is important. And so on. Purpose applies to the medium as well as to the subject matter. Sometimes the medium is the message.

APPROPRIATENESS TO INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

This brings us finally to the overriding criterion in assessing use or abuse of audiovisual aids in reading -- Is the particular medium appropriate to the learning of a given individual at a certain point in time?

Given the current emphasis on learning as the important activity in school; accepting the very personal nature of learning; recognizing that each individual has his own learning style (must do his ownthing); we can be guided through the jungle of technological aids and industrial mass-produced materials by the criterion of individualized learning as measuring the effectiveness of any aid or material.

We as teachers must understand the uses and potential in each kind of aid or material, then guide learners to use what they need as they recognize their own needs and search for ways to satisfy them. If we can help use the great potential in each of our mechanical extensions, we will help to release the even greater potential inherent in the "humanness" of learners. If one learns best with earphones on his head, studying at a carrel, directed by tape recordings, then for him this is the best use of "audio aids". If another learns best from material projected on a monitor or a screen, then for him this is the best use of audiovisual aids. If another learns best by gathering print-outs from a micro-printer, then this is the best use of audiovisual aids. If still another learns best from combined research using all possible sources of ideas and information, then for him these are all the best audiovisual aids he can use.

This paper has not given recipes or panaceas, but it is hoped that

it will have stimulated some thought about establishing philosophical guidelines by which each of us can gauge his own way. Accept the power of these aids. Learn their strengths and their weaknesses. Then use them appropriately for education. There is no abuse, except as we permit the media to use us.